



The Depiction of Slavery through Animal Treatment in Sewell's *Black Beauty* in Relation to Living with Environment

Sri Wahyuni¹, Sudarmin Harun²

sriwahyunicaya@gmail.com¹

Abstract

The purposes of this research were (1) to elaborate the kind of slavery depiction through animal treatment in Sewell's *Black Beauty* and (2) to exposure how the human treatment to horses in the novel is considered as a form of slavery in England Victorian age. The data were obtained from Sewell's *Black Beauty* through a descriptive qualitative method by applying Sociological Approach. The study concluded that human treatment to horses is considered slavery for violating laws on animal protection. Horses are created to work but also there are rules in using them. There were four animal Anti-Cruelty laws in 1867 existed in the novel. Those laws are penalty for overdriving cruelly treating animal, for impounding animals without giving sufficient food and water, penalty for carrying animals in a cruel manner and penalty for abandoning infirm animals in public place. This study also suggest human being that there is no rights of one creature to judge another creatures.

Keywords: Slavery Depiction, Animal Treatment, Anti-Cruelty Law, Victorian age

How to cite: Wahyuni, S. & Harun, S. (2018). The Depiction of Slavery through Animal Treatment in Sewell's *Black Beauty* in Relation to Living with Environment. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 1 (3), 381-390.

1. Introduction

Literary works have been seen as a special kind of writing which serve general educational value, motivating, and enjoyment. Through literary works, human can expand their understanding because literary works present the depiction of imagined experience which can provide authentic material insights (Lazar, 1993). Furthermore, Rahman (2017: 156) stated that literature stimulates the sensitivity of its readers. It presents various aspects of life and even constantly parses life, or may be, a reflection of life

There are several kinds of the literary works. It can be divided into four parts such as novel, short story, drama, play, and poetry. Thahir (2018) stated that novel refers to the literary or written form by people in length volume and large size of story. Short story also refers to the literary or written form but in short volume and small size of story. Poetry is the art of poets, poems in many kinds like ballads, epics, etc. Drama is play with its actress and actor and its scene of dialogues, conversation, tragedies, comedies, and so on.

¹ An-Nuriyah Bontocini Islamic Boarding School.

² Hasanuddin University

Anna Sewell was one of the English novelists who reflect the situation of the Victorian England into her literary work. As an educational novel, *Black Beauty* directly illustrates how the people or workers responsible for the care of horses during the Victorian era, such as ostlers, cabbies, deliverymen, coachmen, and people who live their days involving horses. In addition, Sewell focuses on the character of the working class. *Black Beauty* describes the humane practice of solving how horses should be ridden and treated. On the other hand, this novel also gives lessons to people who ride horses roughly as well as people who are more concerned with the style than the comfort of their animals (Guest, 2011).

According to David S. Favre in *The Development of Anti-Cruelty Laws during the 1800's* (1993), the nineteenth century saw a significant transformation of society's attitude toward animals, which was reflected in the legal system. The legal system began the century viewing animal as items of personal property not much different than a shovel or plow.

Similarly, Henry Salt's in *Animals' Rights Considered in Relation to Human Progress* (1892) states that the prevention of cruelty to animals became an important movement in early 19th Century England, where it grew alongside the humanitarian current that advanced human rights, including anti-slavery movement and later the movement for woman suffrage. The first anti-cruelty bill, intended to stop bull-baiting, was introduced in Parliament in 1800.

Furthermore, Erica Fudge (2004) also points out that *Black Beauty* subverts the historical thinking regarding the relationship between humans and animals in which the human is considered superior because human always performs evaluation. The horse is recognized powerless. The powerless in *Black Beauty* can also dramatically support that it is an act of slavery.

Therefore, in order to gain the insights that the novel *Black Beauty* contains, the writer believes that Sociological Approach is strongly appropriate mode to be used. There are three points why the researcher decides to use this approach. First, it is mainly because the novel itself is written based on the actual condition that Sewell experienced in her life. Secondly, it is considered that the text advocates fairer treatment of horses in Victorian England. And the third, the impact is also still recognized today by a message that *Black Beauty* judge people in order to critique the way how human treat animals.

1.1 The Definition of Slavery

Slavery as written in Collin Dictionary online (2018) are 1) The state or condition of being a slave; a civil relationship whereby one person has absolute power over another and controls his or her life, liberty, and fortune; 2) The subjection of a person to another person, especially in being forced into work; 3) The condition of being subject to some influence or habit; 4) Work done in harsh conditions for low pay. Merriam-Webster online (2018) defines slavery as: 1) Submission to a dominating influence; 2) The state of a person who is a chattel of another.

The definition of slavery first appeared in an international agreement in the League of Nations Slavery Convention of 25 September 1926 which defined slavery as the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised. It further defined the slave trade as all acts involved in the capture, acquisition or disposal of a person with intent to reduce him to slavery; all acts

involved in the acquisition of a slave with a view to selling or exchanging him; all acts of disposal by sale or exchange of a slave acquired with a view to being sold or exchanged, and in general, every act of trade or transport in slaves. (Weissbroadt, 2002: 4).

Furthermore, Pramoedya Ananta Toer states in his quotes (Wikiquote, 2014) that everything excess is oppression. The writer assumes that the author strongly links the slavery to cruelty in her works. The author is not using horse to comment on women, children, servants, workers, slaves, or herself in the novel, rather, Sewell is drawing on ideas about slaves to talk about horses.

The statement above is strongly supported by **Richard Dawkins** (Dawkins, 2017), an Evolutionary Biologist and Science Educator, assumes that there's quite a lot in Science in the Soul about the ethics of the way we treat nonhuman animals. He says nonhuman because, of course, they are animals they're not plants, they're not fungi, they're not bacteria, but they are animals. Therefore, the criteria would be "Can this creature suffers?" This is the criteria that Jeremy Bentham the great moral philosopher laid out: "Can they suffer?" There's every reason to think that mammals, at least and probably many more, can suffer perhaps as much as human being can pain.

Jeremy Bentham, an English barrister, was one of the few legal writers who addressed the issue of animals and the legal system. His *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislations* (Favre, 1993: 3) was closely studied at the time by a large number of individuals, some of whom went on to propose legislation for the protection of animals. Bentham argued that there was no reason why animals should not be accorded protection under the law. Bentham pointed out that animal, "on account of their interests having been neglected by the insensibility of the ancient jurists, stand degraded into the class of *things*." Within a footnote entitled "*Interests of the inferior animals improperly neglected in legislation,*" Bentham argued that the capacity for suffering is the vital characteristic that gives a being the right to legal consideration. The final sentence of the footnote is often used today as a rallying cry for those seeking to promote the cause of animal rights: "The question is not, Can they *reason?* nor, Can they *talk?* but *Can they suffer.*" The following is a more extensive portion of the footnote:

The day has been, I grieve to say in many places it is not yet past, in which the greater part of the species, under the denomination of slaves, have been treated by the law exactly upon the same footing as, in England for example, the inferior races of animals are still. The day *may* come, when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been with holden from them but by the hand of tyranny... It may come one day to be recognized, that the number of legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the *os sacrum*, are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or, perhaps, the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond a comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day, or a week, or even a month old. But suppose the case were otherwise, what would it avail? the question is not, Can they *reason?* nor, Can they *talk?* but *Can they suffer?* (Favre, 1993: 3)

2. Method

This research applies descriptive qualitative method and sociology of literature approach. The focal point of this study is to analyze the depiction of slavery through animal treatment does Victorian illustrated in the novel.

2.1 Source of Data

The data source is conducted by library research. The data are classified into the sources of primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected from the novel *Black Beauty* that first was published in 1877. The writer uses the e-book novel that was posted in 2006. The secondary data used library research method. Library research allows the writer to gather some data from some sources that relevant to this topic. The writer will conduct a comprehensive reading on various external supporting sources; books, articles, essays, journals, and other writings which considered reliable and helpful as references.

2.2 Data collection

The process of collecting data is presented by the writer in two steps. (1) The data which is collected derived from the novel *Black Beauty* that is being studied. Therefore, the writer will do an extensive reading to identify the occurrence of data which are related to the problems that will be analyzed later. The data mentioned above are obtained by using *close reading* method on the novel which based on the general principles of the theoretical concepts underlying this study and, (2) the writer will conduct a comprehensive reading on various external supporting sources to obtain data which are considered relevant to this study. These data are obtained from books, articles, essays, journals and other writings on the internet which the writer considered reliable and helpful to be used as references.

2.3 Data Analysis

In concluding this research, the writer applies the sociology of literature approach by Laurensen and Swingewood. To support their theory, Laurensen and Swingewood introduced three approaches to handle the sociology of literature (Endraswara, 2013:79. They are 1) literary work as a mirror to the age, 2) literary work deals with the social situation of the author and 3) literary work is as the specific historical moment.

3. Findings

3.1 The Kind of Slavery Depiction through Animal Treatment in Sewell's *Black Beauty*

There were some kinds of slavery depiction found in *Black Beauty* novel namely: 1) Bad Behavior when Driving Horses; 2) Some Worse Styles when Driving Horses; 3) Small Amount of Food; 4) Horses are Nothing More Than a Cow; 5) Giving a lot of Load and Working too Heavy; 6) No Sunday Rest. Here are the circumstances where each the slavery depiction is used:

a. *Bad Behavior when Driving Horses*

Data 1: If Smith had been in his right senses he would have been sensible of something wrong in my pace, but he was too drunk to notice (Sewell, 2006:40)

Data 2: Beyond the turnpike was a long piece of road, upon which fresh stones had just been laid -- large sharp stones, over which no horse could be driven quickly without risk of danger. Over this road, with one shoe gone, I was forced to gallop at my utmost speed, my rider meanwhile cutting into me with his whip, and with wild curses urging me to go still faster. Of course my shoeless foot suffered dreadfully; the hoof was broken and split down to the very quick, and the inside was terribly cut by the sharpness of the stones (Sewell, 2006:41).

Data 3: He seemed furious at their having moved, and with whip and rein punished them brutally, even beating them about the head. Our gentleman saw it all, and

stepping quickly across the street, said in a decided voice: "If you don't stop that directly, I'll have you arrested for leaving your horses, and for brutal conduct." (Sewell, 2006: 64)

b. Using Worse Styles when Driving Horses

Data 4: First, there were the tight-rein drivers -- men who seemed to think that all depended on holding the reins as hard as they could, never relaxing the pull on the horse's mouth, or giving him the least liberty of movement. They are always talking about "keeping the horse well in hand", and "holding a horse up", just as if a horse was not made to hold himself up (Sewell, 2006:44)

Data 5: Then there are the loose-rein drivers, who let the reins lie easily on our backs, and their own hand rest lazily on their knees. Of course, such gentlemen have no control over a horse, if anything happens suddenly. If a horse shies, or starts, or stumbles, they are nowhere, and cannot help the horse or themselves till the mischief is done. Of course, for myself I had no objection to it, as I was not in the habit either of starting or stumbling, and had only been used to depend on my driver for guidance and encouragement. Still, one likes to feel the rein a little in going downhill, and likes to know that one's driver is not gone to sleep (Sewell, 2006:44)

Data 6: They always seemed to think that a horse was something like a steam-engine, only smaller. At any rate, they think that if only they pay for it a horse is bound to go just as far and just as fast and with just as heavy a load as they please. And be the roads heavy and muddy, or dry and good; be they stony or smooth, uphill or downhill, it is all the same -- on, on, on, one must go, at the same pace, with no relief and no consideration (Sewell, 2006:45)

c. Having Small Amount of Food

Data 7: After a while it seemed to me that my oats came very short; I had the beans, but bran was mixed with them instead of oats, of which there were very few; certainly not more than a quarter of what there should have been. In two or three weeks this began to tell upon my strength and spirits. The grass food, though very good, was not the thing to keep up my condition without corn. However, I could not complain, nor make known my wants. So it went on for about two months; and I wondered that my master did not see that something was the matter (Sewell, 2006:48)

d. Horses are Nothing More Than a Cow

Data 8: I should say he was the laziest, most conceited fellow I ever came near. Of course, it was a great thing not to be ill-used, but then a horse wants more than that. I had a loose box, and might have been very comfortable if he had not been too indolent to clean it out. He never took all the straw away, and the smell from what lay underneath was very bad; while the strong vapors that rose made my eyes smart and inflame, and I did not feel the same appetite for my food (Sewell, 2006:49)

Data 9: "Your horse has got the 'thrush', and badly, too; his feet are very tender; it is fortunate that he has not been down. I wonder your groom has not seen to it before. This is the sort of thing we find in foul stables, where the litter is never properly cleaned out (Sewell, 2006:50)

e. Having a lot of Load and Working too Heavy

Data 10: One day I was loaded more than usual, and part of the road was a steep uphill. I used all my strength, but I could not get on, and was obliged continually to stop. This did not please my driver, and he laid his whip on badly. "Get on, you lazy fellow," he said, "or I'll make you." (Sewell, 2006:77)

Data 11: "Papa, papa, do take a second cab," said the young girl in a beseeching tone. "I am sure we are wrong, I am sure it is very cruel."

Data 12: I got along fairly till we came to Ludgate Hill; but there the heavy load and my own exhaustion were too much. I was struggling to keep on, goaded by constant chucks of the rein and use of the whip, when in a single moment -- I cannot tell how -- my feet slipped from under me, and I fell heavily to the ground on my side; the suddenness and the force with which I fell seemed to beat all the breath out of my body. I lay perfectly still; indeed, I had no power to move, and I thought now I was going to die (Sewell, 2006:79)

f. **Getting No Sunday Rest**

Data 13: When they found out my weakness they said I was not worth what they gave for me, and that I must go into one of the low cabs, and just be used up; that is what they are doing, whipping and working with never one thought of what I suffer -- they paid for me, and must get it out of me, they say. The man who hires me now pays a deal of money to the owner every day, and so he has to get it out of me too; and so it's all the week round and round, with never a Sunday rest." (Sewell, 2006:67)

Data 14: Skinner had a low set of cabs and a low set of drivers; he was hard on the men, and the men were hard on the horses. In this place we had no Sunday rest, and it was in the heat of summer (Sewell, 2006:78)

3.2 Animal Treatment as a Form of Slavery

The following are the tenth of the animal Anti-Cruelty Law in 1867 that the writer has connected to the previous data which is recognized broke the animal rights as showed in the novel (Favre, 1993: 33).

Table 1. The Kind of Slavery

No.	Animal Anti-Cruelty-Law 1867	The Kind of Slavery
1	Section 1. Penalty for overdriving, cruelly treating animal, etc	Having a lot of Load and Working too Heavy (e) Getting No Sunday Rest (f)
	Section 2. For keeping a place for cook fighting, bull baiting, dog fighting, etc	
2	Section 3. For impounding animals without giving sufficient food and water	Having Small Amount of Food (c)
	Section 4. In what case any person may feed, etc. Impounded animal	
3	Section 5. Penalty for carrying animals in a cruel manner	Using Worse Styles when Driving Horses (b) Horses are Nothing More Than a Cow (d)
	Section 6. License for using dogs before vehicles	
4	Section 7. Penalty for abandoning infirm animals in public place	Bad Behavior when Driving Horses (a)
	Section 8. When agent of society may arrest for violations of this act	
	Section 9. Who shall publish this act, and when shall it be published	
	Section 10. Proviso	

4. Discussion

Dealing with it, based on the findings, the researcher formulates four laws which indicate that human treatment to horses in the novel is considered as a slavery depiction. They are discussed as the followings:

a. Penalty for Overdriving, Cruelly Treating Animals, etc.

The above law shows that data 10, 11, 12 in point e and data 13, 14 in point f are agreed with this law. This law explains how animals should not be treated and cruelly employed by human beings. Data 10, 11, 12 in point e have shown that horses are loaded with heavy loads and are also employed too heavily in the *Black Beauty* novel while the data 13, 14 in point f data also shows how horses have not got breaks on Sundays in the novel *Black Beauty*. This is in accordance with what is contained in Anti-Cruelty Law in 1867.

b. For Impounding Animals without Giving Sufficient Food and Water

The above law shows that data 7 in point c is agreed with this law. This law explains how animals should be given sufficient quantities of food and drink before and after their work. Data 7 in point c has shown that horses are treated very badly in the *Black Beauty* novel. Horses are not getting enough food and drink, so it can be stated that it violates Anti-Cruelty Law in 1867.

c. Penalty for Carrying Animals in a Cruel Manner

The above law shows that data 4, 5, 6 in point b and data 8, 9 in point d agreed with this law. This law explains how animals should be driven or piloted well and in good manner. Data 4, 5, 6 in point b has shown how horses are driven by a variety of horribly troubling styles, draining horsepower, and of course annoying horses in driving while data 8, 9 in point d has also shown how horses are regarded no more from a cow so sometimes it is not cleaned and properly cared for in the *Black Beauty* novel. Data 4, 5, 6 and 8, 9 have clearly violated the animal rights contained in the Anti-Cruelty Law in 1867.

d. Penalty for Abandoning Infirm Animals in Public Place

The above law shows that data 1, 2, 3 in point a, is agreed with this law. This law explains how animals should not be abandoned or placed in public places. Data 1, 2, 3 in point a, has shown how people have behaved badly by leaving horses in public places in the *Black Beauty* novel because of their bad habits of liquor. Based on the data obtained, it is clear that the evidence of human treatment to horses contained in the *Black Beauty* novel is an irregular and inhumane act because it has violated Anti-Cruelty Law in 1867.

From some data obtained, it can be stated that there are some miseries treatments among the horses illustrated in England 19th century. This certainly has given a fairly real picture that the existence of horses in England 19th century is needed by human being even though on the other hand the industrial revolution had developed at that time. Horses are still the main means of transportation for the English community. Anna Sewell as the author of the novel has also stated that the main purpose of this novel is to provide a lesson on how to care and use horses well.

The relationship between human being and horses are explained by Anna Sewell very clearly through her novel. As for their transportation, horses are something that cannot be separated for all human's activities. Engine has increased in 19th century England but the use of horses in everyday lives was still the main mode of transportation.

People really rely on horses to get around, using them as a carriage down transport, taxi cab, rented horses, cart horse, and so on.

The way human treats the horses in *Black Beauty* novel has violated the boundaries of horses as well as the animal rights. Human treatment to horses is considered slavery for violating laws on animal protection. Horses are created to work but also there are rules in using them and human being has no rights to judge another creatures.

Throughout *Black Beauty* novel, Sewell depicted clearly the life of horses and the way human treats the horses. Sewell was very creative to reflect the social condition of England 19th century in the novel. The animal treatment and the use of animal under legally law become the common thing in the society as well as reflected in the novel.

This research delivers three universal messages for human being in relation to living with environment. It is presented as the followings:

1. *The better I behaved the better I should be treated, and that it was wisest always to do my best to please my master (Sewell, 2006:7).*

The Black Beauty as the major character in this novel has several changing names, the change in name reflecting change in his status but always follow his mother's advises to please his master. In facing this life, people are demanded to always share kindness. As a part of society, people should be aware that many people around needs to carrying and knowing each other. There are no people in the world can be life alone without any help, communication, and interaction with other people. People live in the world need to communicate, to share, and to help each other. The better people attitude the better other people attitude to them, so this principle is needed by people in crossing this life through sharing kindness to all creatures.

2. *There is no religion without love, and people may talk as much as they like about their religion, but if it does not teach them to be good and kind to man and beast it is all a sham (Sewell, 2006:22).*

Black Beauty loses his name through his experiences but keep his good name. Each religions teaching in the world command their members to be good and kind to man as well as to other creatures such as animal. Human being as a creature with mind, human should be an agent of control to all of the situations happened in the world. Human being should keep, care and adapt well to all creatures around them. Not only to keep the relation between human and human but more than it, is to create a good environment to nonhuman creatures. They are entitled nonhuman creatures because they do not have a language to speak out, they do not have mind to think, but they can feel the joy and pain.

3. *If we see cruelty or wrong that we have the power to stop, and do nothing, we make ourselves sharers in the guilt (Sewell, 2006:65).*

Sometimes, human being in doing an action does not have enough time to think clearly that it is good or not. It is happened because of human's lack. Everybody needs to remind because nobody is perfect in the world. To create a good condition and support human social welfare, people should follow this principle and always remind each other. It will be fine if people are better today than the previous day.

5. Conclusion

Slavery is a kind of an action or condition where one person has absolute power over another and controls someone life, liberty, and fortune. Human treatment to horses in

Black Beauty is considered slavery for violating laws on animal protection. Horses are created to work with some restricted rules for them. There were four animal Anti-Cruelty laws in 1867 existed in the novel. Those laws are penalty for overdriving cruelly treating animal, for impounding animals without giving sufficient food and water, penalty for carrying animals in a cruel manner and penalty for abandoning infirm animals in public place. This study also suggest human being that there is no rights of one creature to judge another creatures.

This research found three universal messages for human being in relation to living with environment. Those are; 1) the better I behaved the better I should be treated, and that it was wisest always to do my best to please my master; 2) There is no religion without love, and people may talk as much as they like about their religion, but if it does not teach them to be good and kind to man and beast it is all a sham; 3) If we see cruelty or wrong that we have the power to stop, and do nothing, we make ourselves sharers in the guilt. The implication of this research is to foster a new awareness in understanding and treating horses in everyday life.

References

- Dawkins, R. (2017). *Is Animal Cruelty the New Slavery?* Retrieved February 14th 2018 from: <http://bigthink.com/videos/richard-dawkins-is-animal-cruelty-the-new-slavery>.
- Endraswara, S. (2013). *Metodologi Penelitian Sastra*. Yogyakarta Center for Academic Publishing Service.
- Favre, D. S. (1993). *The Development of Anti-Cruelty Laws During the 1800's*. Michigan State University College of Law: Faculty Publications.
- Fudge, E. (2004). "Animal Lives: Erica Fudge Asks If, and How, a Biography of an Animal Might Be Written." *History Today* 54.
- Guest, K. (2011). *Black Beauty: His Grooms and Companions: The Autobiography of a Horse*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Lazar, G. (1993). *Literature and language teaching*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Rahman, F. (2017). Cyber Literature: A Reader-Writer Interactivity. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*. Vol.3, No 4. DOI: 10.23918/ijsses.v3i4p156
- Salt's, H. (1892). *Animals' Rights Considered in Relation to Human Progress*. Centaur Press.
- Sewell, A. (2006). *Black Beauty the Autobiography of a Horse*. The Project Gutenberg License.
- Slavery. (2018, April 19th). In Collins Dictionary online. Retrieved from: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/slavery>
- Slavery. (2018, April 19th). Merriam Webster Dictionary online. Retrieved from:" <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/slavery>
- Thahir, M. F., Rahman, F., & Makka, M. (2018). The Reflection of the Global Capitalism System in Suzanne Collin's the Hunger Games. *Jurnal Ilmu Budaya*. 6 (1). 97-103. Retrieved from <http://journal.unhas.ac.id/index.php/jib/article/viewFile/4302/2447>

Weissbroadt, D. (2002). *Abolishing Slavery and its Contemporary Forms*. United Nations:New York and Geneva. Slavery, Servitude, Forced Labour and Similar Institutions and Practices Convention of 1926 (hereinafter Slavery Convention 1926), *League of Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 60, p. 253; entered into force on 9 March 1927